A

COMPANION

FOR

Debtor's and Priſoners,

AND

Advice to Creditors

IN TEN

LETTERS:

From a Gentleman in Priſon, to a Member of Parliament. Wherein, *Firſt*, the Villianies and Inſolencies of *Bayliffs*. *Secondly*, the Evil Practices of *Jaylers* and Pretended *Solicitors*, and *Thirdly*, the Irregularities of Priſons in General, are breifly Detected and Expoſed.

Together with a Particular Deſcription of *Newgate*, the *Marſhalſea*, the two *Compters*, *Ludgate*, the *Fleet*, and *Kings Bench*, with Reflections upon Priſons in general, and Propoſals for regulating the whole.

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TO THE

Right Honourable

Sir *Francis Child*,

LORD MAYOR

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON*.

My Lord,

'TIS Natural for Persons in distress to flye somewhere for assistance; That's a Principle Ingrafted into the very Being and Constitution of Men, and in many particulars may be well enough justify'd and allow'd; but then my Lord, there is a very great

difficulty in chooſing out the Perſons, and Repreſenting the Grievances; and truly, I'm afraid our miſtakes in thoſe Points have been the cauſe why ſo many good Endeavours have prov'd Inſucceſsful. That I have made a right Election of the Perſon I am well aſſur'd, both from your Lordſhips Character of a good as well as of a great Man, and Lord Mayor of *London*: So that if the things are well Repreſented, which *I* humbly ſubmit to your Honours Judgment, and withal are Reaſonable in themſelves, and neceſſary to be redreſs'd, why then I preſume there is but ſmall grounds to ſuſpect the ſucceſs. As for the Papers themſelves, they are indeed what they pretend to be, the Letters of a Gentleman in Priſon to a Member of Parliament; who, if he had not been call'd off from us, by a haſty fate

fate, had long since attempted the Regulation of *Bayliffs* and *Goals*, but Sir, this great work (tho there have been some advances made towards it) is yet unfinish'd, and the Poor Debtors and Prisoners do now more then ever, labour and struggle under the Wracks and Tortures of these unmerciful Wretches. My Lord, I need not aggravate the Circumstances to you, they're bad enough indeed, and but too bad without it; So that as things are now, the Regulations of Prisons, and the suppressing the Insolence and Extravigance of *Bayliffs*, would be a work almost as Meritorious as that of your great Predecessor, Sir *William Waller* and deservedly Entitle for your sake, the Lord Mayor of the City of *London*, to another Character and Sword of Honour for ever. I would not spend your Lordships time in use-

uſeleſs flattery, or Complement your Honour Infinitely above 'em both; only this I muſt ſay, that ſince your Lordſhips Election, the drooping Genius of the City is ſtrangely Reviv'd, and Men and things have put on a new Face. But Sir, ſhort Books ſhould have but ſhort Dedications, or rather none at all, neither had I given your Honour the trouble of this but upon ſome particular Motives: Well my Lord, conſidering the whole Circumſtance, and eſpecially, the Errand theſe Papers come upon, *I* cannot much dread your acceptance of 'em, and withal, that you will Pardon their Author, who is, and ſhall ever eſteem it a happyneſs to be thought worthy to ſubſcribe himſelf,

Your Lordſhips,

moſt Obedient Servant,

E S.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

THE chief Arguments that urged me to Publish the following Letters are, briefly these two; first, to let the World see what kind of Creatures Bayliffs, Goalers *and pretended* Solicitors *are, and then to direct 'em how to manage themselves, and to Fence and Guard against 'em with the most security, upon occasion, how far they'll Answer this Design, must be left to the Judgment of those that think them worth their perusal, only with this caution, that the matters here related are no Chymerical Notions or Forgerys, but pure matters of Fact and Truth; Indeed, there is here and there a Supernumerary expression intermixt, to make the dismal Relation go down a little*

little the more gratefully, but ſtill the main and ſubſtance of the matter is kept within the bounds of every Days Practice and Experience. That there will be ſome out-crys againſt them, is not to be doubted, and eſpecially among Bayliffs, *or ſome ſuch kind of Creatures, who perhaps may be ſo impudent to charge them with falſehood, &c. And what if they do, conſidering the Teſtimony of ſuch kind of People is but an indifferent Evidence at beſt, eſpecially when they'r Witneſſes in their own Caſe, I think I need not trouble my ſelf much about that matter; the other part of my deſign is to propoſe a medium, how theſe Great and Intollerable grievances may be rectified and redreſt, or at leaſt, if I fail in it my ſelf, to ſet ſome better Heads to work about it.*

For I'm confident, as caſes ſtand, theſe matters require a very ſpeedy redreſs. The Evil Practices of Bayliffs, *&c. Being now one of the greateſt miſeries of the Nation, but eſpecially of this Town, and muſt grow every Day worſe and worſe, till at laſt they become intollerable.*

LET-

LETTER I.

OR, THE INTRODUCTION.

SIR,

WHEN I had receiv'd your Letter, wherein you are pleas'd to command me to give you the best Account I was able of the Villanous Practices of *Bayliffs* and their Assistants; the Irregularities of Prisons in General, and the Miseries and Calamities of Poor Debtors in their respective Confinements, I must confess, my wounds began to bleed a fresh, and truly at first sight I could not choose but think, but that your request was very like that of Queen *Dido* to *Æneas*, when she desir'd him to give her the last Relation of his Ten Years War, together with the destruction of his City and Countrey. But Sir, this Notion from a very few second thoughts was soon superseded by another, which I since am satisfied was far more agreeable both to your Inclination and Design. I quickly foresaw that a Person of your Extraordinary Character could not be guilty of the Barbarous Vanity, to Insult

and play upon the Agonys of the Unfortunate, but rather that you had some good Design, after you were fully instructed in these kind of matters, to Propose an Expedient to your Honourable House for the putting these Affairs in a better Posture. This is indeed a work well Becoming an English Gentleman, especially one of the great Representatives of the Nation; And truely 'tis a subject both of our wonder and sorrow, that it hath unluckily hap'ned to lie so long Unattempted. 'Tis pitty sure that *England*, that is the Mistress of the best Laws as well as the best Religion in the Christian world, should suffer such a dangerous Contagion to rage so long in her very Heart and Bowels, without Endeavoring by some means or other to suppress, or at least to curb the Distemper. Well, Sir, I am Mightily Affected with your Generous Design, and since you have been pleased to pitch upon me to give you this Ungrateful Relation, you may Depend upon't, I shall do it very fairly and Impartially, and only Declare to you the pure matters of Fact, and such other Occurrences that have fall'n within the Compass of my own dear bought Experience; but then Sir all this will be too much to be drawn into the narrow Compass of one Letter; and therefore for method sake I'll Divide it into particulars, and so continue it from Post to Post till I have finish'd the whole.

LETTER II.

In which is an Account of the baſe Proceedings of Baylifs in General, and the Villanous tricks and Stratagems they uſe to extort Money both from the Debtor and Creditor.

BAYLIFFS in General are a ſort of Deſolute Wretches made up of the Dregs and Refuge of Mankind; they are commonly a kind of Beaſts of Prey, that for their lude and vitious behaviour are Baniſh'd from the ſober Converſation of their fellow Creatures; and ſure then 'tis great pitty that ſuch vermine as theſe, which ought rather to be Chain'd up and driven out from the reſt of the World, ſhould be let at large, and withall Entruſted with a priviledg that Entitles them to a larger opportunity then ordinary, to Tranſact and Propagate their Villanous Practices. Sir, I hope you will not miſtake me; I am not Declaiming againſt or Arraigning the Office of a Bayliff, but the perſons that Execute it. I confeſs 'tis highly Expedient there ſhould be ſuch kind of Officers, and truely 'twould be morally Impoſſible for the *Nation* to Subſiſt without ſome body to Execute

the Law in some Cases, but then 'tis very hard that none, or at least very few but Profligate Rogues and Canibals should be singl'd out for such an Employment. I'm confident (with Submission to better Advice) there might be a Medium found out to put the Management of this Affair into sober hands, which would not only be a very great advantage to poor Debtors, but likewise a Considerable ease to Creditors, and a Benefit to the whole *Kingdom* in General. Sir, I think it will be needless to trouble you with the strange kind of tricks, they use, and the cunning stratagems and devices they have to get Men into their Clutches; that's something Forreign to my Purpose, and therefore I will not Insist upon't; But rather proceed to shew you how Basely and Villanously they use them when they have once got them.

To go on then, when the Master *Bayliff*, or *Officer* (as he terms himself) has got the Writt; why then according to the Nature of the person that is to be Arrested, he immediately whistles for two or three Dogs, or Followers, that are always Lurking about his House upon such occasions; and out he goes, and having bon'd or Nab'd this Defendant (as they call it) why then their next Business is to run him to a Spunging House, which is commonly one of their own, and having fixt him there, if they perceive he's a stranger to their Managements, and under any kind of fear or Apprehension of 'em, then they turn in to him a Kennel of deep mouth'd *Hell Hounds*, that eat and Drink upon him at Discretion; and in the interim another party of

Curr's

Curr's are sent out to hunt the Town to try if they can find any more Creditors that they can by any means incline or seduce to enter their actions against him; and so having sufficiently gorg'd themselves, the Master of the Ceremonys call's for the Reckoning, which the poor Prisoner is forc'd to pay, be it what it will, and then under Pretence of removing him out of sight, &c. They Conduct him to one of their strong Rooms, which they have for such purposes. There the Wretch is left alone, and what's worse, if he call's for Pen, Ink & paper to send to any of his Friends, 'tis ten to one but they open his Letter, and send or not send it as they find it will best answer their Ends. Well, but he must not continue in this kind of Separation long neither, before one of the Gang is sent up to him, who under pretence of a great deal of Civility and Compassion to his misfortune, wheedles and Cajoles him into a Confession of his Circumstances: Which he directly Relates to a Cabal of Rogues below, who are all the while debating which way they may make the most of him. Having thus furnish'd themselves with the Nature of his Abilitys, &c. another of the surliest Curs in the whole Kennel is sent again to him to put him in mind of a Barbarous Custom they have, i. e. Civility Money; this *Gentleman*, with a kind of Unmannerly Impudence, Represents to him the dismalness and charge of going to Prison, and withall let's him know that if he doth not Instantly Compound with the *Officer* for his liberty to stay there, That he will in a little time call a Coach and carry him away; and thus having work'd him

up

up to the higheſt Pitch of Diſpair and fear, he leaves him. After theſe two have Finiſh'd their Managements, the *Officer* in Chief ſoon makes his Appearance. Come Sir, ſays he, what do you intend to do? I dare not keep you, beſides, if I durſt, I muſt live by my buſineſs, I can't keep my Servants and my ſelf to wait upon you for nothing. You know our Methods, and if you have a Deſign to ſtay here to night, why then let me ſee ſome Money from you. Here the poor Man is again forc'd, to ſpeak in their own Dialect, to Lug out, and gives him what he has, or at leaſt what this Unmerciſull *Governour* is pleaſed to extort from him; upon which Conſideration he's Admitted to the favour of being ſtrongly Lock'd and Barrocaded up for that night in a Priſon, which in all points is equall, and in ſome worſe then that which according to Law, he ought to be carryed to; but ſtill they have not done with him neither, the next that Attacks him is the good Miſtreſs of the Houſe, but ſhe like an honeſt Conſcientious Woman doth not want much of him, only ſix or ſeven Shillings which the *Officers* men have Drunk below, and two Shillings for his Bed, and then ſhe'll lay on the ſheet's; well there's no Remedy, but this muſt be pay'd too as well as the reſt, or elſe after all, he muſt to Priſon. Well Sir, to make as ſhort of this ſad Relation as I can, upon theſe and ſome other Terms of the like Nature, he's at laſt Lock'd up till the next morning, and then they begin to play the former Game over again, till at laſt finding that they have Wrack'd him as far as the Nature of the thing will bear, they then

come

come to him, and in good Earneſt tell him that there are other Actions againſt him, and that *Unleſs* he can raiſe Money to remove himſelf to the *Fleet* or *Kings Bench*, he muſt after all prepare to go to Priſon. From this ſhort Account I Preſume you will be able to Judg at the Miſerable Condition of thoſe poor Wretches, whoſe Misfortunes have thrown them into the Jaws of theſe kind of Vermine. I ſhall therefore only trouble you with two or three lines more to ſhew you likewiſe how they abuſe the Perſon's that Employ em, and ſo take my Leave till the next *Poſt*. And this they do Chiefly two ways. Firſt, by taking Money to Arreſt the *Perſon* that is the Debtor; and after, accepting a *Bribe* from the *Creditor*, &c. this is a Cheat ſo common among them; and ſo well known to every body that hath been forc'd to make uſe of them, that I think I need not Enlarge upon it. 'Tis an Act that they pride themſelves in, and look upon it as an Extraordinary point of Honeſty and Civility; Inſomuch that I have heard one of the Chiefeſt Maſters of the *Order*, with a kind of vanity, acknowledg, that if he did not get more by Betraying the *Creditor*, then he did by *Arreſting* the *Debtor*, he could not get bread by the Employment.

The other Trick that they uſe to Cheat the *Creditor* out of his money, and Sometimes out of his Debt too, is to Perſwade him to lay his Action, notwithſtanding he knows the *Debtor* is reſolv'd to bring a *Habeas Corpus*; nay, I have known ſome Cunning *Debtors* my ſelf in ſuch a caſe, give a *Bayliff* a Liſt of all the *Creditors* they were Apprehenſive would give them any Trouble,

with

with Directions to go to them and get them to enter their Actions against them, under the Notion, that when once they had made themselves Prisoners in the *Fleet* or *Kings Bench*, they would not then think them worth any further trouble. In short, the Villanous Devices, and the Base and Insolent Behaviour of these sort of *People*, have render'd 'em one of the Greatest Grievances of the *Nation*, but of this *Town* more Especially. Sir, I Appeal to your own and to the thoughts of every Considering Man, whether it be not a sad *Prospect* to see whole Herds of these kind of *Creatures Ranging* about the *Town* with Swords by their sides, exactly Answering the *Devils Character*, *Going about seeking whom they may Devour*.

To wind up this Unpleasant Narrative; 'Tis Doubtless a very Unlucky case that the *Executive* part of the *Law* should be committed to such *Hangmen* as these, Indeed I can give no other Reason for it, but that the *Nation* hath been yet Insensible of the Inconveniency that attends upon it, or rather have thought it a trifle not worth their Notice. But Sir, since you have been so Generously kind to *Embark* your self in the Matter, I will not at all question but you will soon bring it to a Happy Issue.

LETTER III.

Wherein the Practices of the Bayliffs *belonging to the Sheriff of* Middlesex, *are particularly exposed and detected; together with a short Description of* Newgate, *&c.*

THE *Bayliffs* that belong to the Sheriff of *Middlesex* are only permitted to execute the Kings Writts, *&c.* but then because they cannot hold a person to Bail for a debt under 10*l.* they commonly joyn themselves with a brother belonging to the *Marshalsea*; and these two, together with the assistance of 2 or 3 Followers, are a compleat Sett to carry on the worthy Occupation.

Their chief business here (as in all other Counties in *England*, is to attend upon the Sheriff or his Deputy at the Execution of Criminals, as well as to serve his Warrants and levy his Executions; and for this formerly they had their setled Fees and Allowances; and withal, instead of their Swords and Battoons, which they march with now, were oblig'd to carry only a White Wand in their hands, to distinguish them from other persons. How this good Custom came to be worn out and discontinued, I know not; but this I know, that for want of having

ving their Fees and Dematds fixt, and ſome ſort of means us'd to bridle their Inſolence and Extravagance, the meaner ſort of people are ſtrangely inſulted and impos'd upon by 'em.

Well Sir, when one of theſe ſort have Arreſted their Man, after they have manag'd him as I mentioned in my laſt, why then he muſt go to *Newgate*, which is the chief Goal belonging to the County of *Middleſex*: And here, Sir, I will beg your favour to ſtop a little, while I trouble you with a ſhort deſcription of that diſmal place.

The Deſcription of Newgate, *together with their manner of Government, &c. as it relates to Debtors.*

Newgate (as I ſaid) is the chief Priſon for the County of *Middleſex*, for Debtors, as well as Felons and Traytors, and is divided into Three different Stations or Degrees. The firſt is called *the Preſs-Yard*, whither none but perſons that have Money to pay extravagant Prizes for their Lodging and Entertainment are admitted. The Second is the Common Side, where the Rogues and Thieves, Whores and Pick-Pockets, together with ſome Miſerable Debtors, are all Jumbled one among another, and truly make a very deplorable ſight indeed. The Third is the Debtors ſide, to which miſerable place (for I cannot name it without a great deal of Agony and Diſorder) my Misfortunes brought me. The manner of it was thus: About a twelve month ago One of theſe Sparks took me up upon an Execution;

cution; and finding that I knew their Tricks too well to be impos'd upon, he forthwith conducts me to *Newgate*: I think 'twas about ten of the Clock at Night before I reacht my New Quarters. He had no sooner thrust me into the Lodg, but *Cerberus* the Turn-Key, with a great many other Dogs of Lower Stations came howling and grinning about me. Their first Complement was, *Sir, have you any money? If not, you must go on the Common Side.* Tho I was not much terrified with their Threats and Oaths, however I told them, *If they would give me Liberty till the morning, to enquire into the Custom of the Place, I would be conformable.* Well, with much ado and a great deal of Swearing, Curling and Hectoring, they unlock'd the Door that leads up to the Debtors Apartment: but here I was in a worse state than before; being left in the dark upon a dismal pair of Stairs, not daring to stir a foot for fear of tumbling into some hole, and breaking my Neck: and to mend the matter too, comes one of the Dogs that brought me thither, and insults over me for not compounding with the Officer, *&c.* Well, Sir, between this and the nauseous stink that came down the Stairs, I confess I had much ado to support my self; however I was forc'd to do it for an Hour at least before I could perswade any body to come to my assistance upon any terms. At last comes an under Turn-Key, and with a great deal of Indifference and more Impudence, ask'd me what I'd have? I found now 'twas no time to urge Justice or Humanity to him; and therefore in short I told him, *If he would change my Station, I would gra-*

fie him to his Satisfaction. Here he began to soften a little, and withal told me, *That their Custom was to Lock up all their Doors at Eight of the Clock exactly; which were not to be opened again but upon particular Considerations; but however, for half a Crown he'd open the Door of the Debtors Hall, and turn me in there, where I should find a bed and company.* With this I soon comply'd; and so in he lets me; but withal leaves me in the dark again: but here I had not been long before one of the Prisoners calls to me; and finding me to be a stranger and a Debtor, strikes a Light; by the help of which I got a view of my new Lodging; which I must own to you was dress'd up with so many wretched and deplorable Circumstances, that in the whole Accounts of my Life, I never met with any thing like it: In this *Common Hall* (as they call it) were 12 beds at least, and two persons in every one of them. Where some lay naked, others with shav'd Heads without any Caps upon 'em, and most of them taking Tobacco; which together with the Smoak and Stink, made such a dismal Spectacle, that I defie any Poet or Painter to fancy or describe the like: However, Sir, there was no Remedy, but here I must stay; and truly, as cases stood, I was pretty well satisfied I was here too. To make as short of the matter as I can, I walk'd in this Noble Hall till Morning, when about 7 my Chamber-fellows began to turn out of their respective Kennels, and came to me to demand their *Garnish*, which they told me was *6 s.* and *8 d.* This truly I paid without any grudging, and they spent it as freely in good Bread and Cheese, and Ale and Beer; and

to

to make me amends, drank my Health, and wish'd me an happy Enlargement, &c. 'Twould make a man wonder indeed to see with what Cheerfullness and Courage some of these poor Wretches undergo this miserable confinement, and how many hard shifts & stratagems they are forc'd to use, to get half a Crown against *Saturday* night, to pay for their beds, to prevent being turn'd over to the *Common side*, among the Lions, as they certainly are upon the first default. But to proceed: this Ceremony of the *Garnish* was no sooner over, and indeed it did not last long, but I was call'd to another, *i. e.* to come to pay my Entrance Fees, and for my Enrollment, &c. which, as near as I remember, was either 8 or 9 *s.* more. Upon the whole, I found my charge of walking in the Hall for a Night was about 20 *s.* which I hope you'll be pleas'd to remember in its proper place. Well, Sir, I continued still walking in the Hall till about 3 in the afternoon, and had struck up an agreement with a man in a shirt to Enkennel with him at night, but my Creditor coming in the interim, and discharging me, that Adventure went off. However, I did what I could to equip my self as far as my stay would give leave, with the nature and manner of the place. I went thro' all the Debtors Division, and found it all over so Dismall and wretched, that it almost put me out of conceit with Mankind, to think they could be so exaltedly cruell and barbarous to Creatures of their own Species. But now my Discharge being come, One of the Curs that bark'd and snarl'd at me but the very last night, comes up to me shaking his Tail,

Tall, and fawning upon me. *Sir your Discharge is come, and Mr T—— would desire you to walk into the Lodge*; where Mr Clerk of the papers meets me, and wishes me joy of my Liberty, but withall tells me there's a small matter to be pay'd first, only Seventeen shillings more for Fees; and so I may goe whither I please. This new Demand of Fees I confess Disturb'd me more then all the rest; however I found a down right denyall would not do, and therefore thought 'twould be best to plead Inability; but 'twas all one, this plea was no better then the other; all the answer that I could get was, that they never trusted any body, and that I must send out for money, and in the Interim return and take a turn or two more in the Hall. Truly with his leave I did not care for walking any more in the Hall neither; and so after a great deal of Wrangling and Swearing, I made up the matter for ten and Six pence. But still, before I must have my *Quietus*, the Groom of the Chambers must be satisfied too; and his demand was half a Crown for Sheets. Says I, *Friend, I had no Sheets; I have not lain down since I came into your Territories.* *That's all one to me*, says he, *you might if you wou'd; and I won't lose my Fees by you.* I must confess I could not chuse but smile at this, tho indeed it vext me too. However, to be quit of them all, I threw him a shilling; and so we parted. Sir, that I may not trespass too far upon your patience, I'll stop here, and trouble you with the Remainder of this Adventure the next Return.

LETTER IV.

Being the Continuation of the Description of Newgate.

SIR,

HAving, as I told you in my last, satisfy'd and discharg'd my Obligations to my respective Governeurs, I had still a Curiosity to inspect a little further into the Constitution and Rarities of this Famous Citadel; and accordingly to carry on my design, I took one of the Gentlemen of the body to the Tavern, and told him I had a great inclination to be a little more satisfied in the Manners and Conditions of their House, and withal told him, that if he would do me the favour to shew me the Rest, I would greatify him for his paines; with this he readily compli'd, and immediately goes and fetches the Keys, and leads me first into the Common Side; where I must confess to you I was encounterd with so many dismal Objects, and so many amazing Scenes of horrid misery, that I cannot begin my Relation of 'em without the deepest Reluctancy and Concern. In one part lay an heap of Rogues and Theives, in another a Clump of Whores and Pick-Pockets, and in a

Third

Third a Strange Cluſter of Whores and Rogues Jumbl'd together, and here and there a poor miſerable Debtor was ſcatter'd amongſt 'em, who for want of money to pay his Chamber Rent, was turn'd over from the other ſide. Some were almoſt naked, others almoſt ſtarv'd; ſome were ſwearing, drinking and blaſpheming, others howling and yelping, and lamenting their wretched condition, whilſt others were laughing at 'em, and deriding 'em. In ſhort, there was ſuch a conſtant ſmoak, ſuch an unwholeſome and contagious ſmell, ſuch a wild Herd of Rude Creatures, and ſuch an unaccountable confuſion and diſorder among them, that I was forc'd to ſpeak to my Guide to haſten me out from 'em as faſt as he could. The next place he led me to was the Maſter Felons Apartment: This indeed was a little better than the former, and but a little; but hither none are admitted but thoſe that have money. Here I confeſs they did not look quite ſo deplorable, but bad enough too, and I think their Manners and Behaviour, if poſſible, are worſe than the other. Well, Sir, I had ſoon my belly full of all theſe kind of Curioſities; and ſo I deſir'd him to let me have a ſhort view of the *Preſs-yard*, and then I'd have done with him. When I came there, I muſt own I was ſomething ſurprized to find ſuch a great alteration both in the place and perſons. The place it ſelf was well enough, only a little obnoxious by an ungrateful ſtink, which I ſuppoſe might be deriv'd to it from the Common Side: The perſons had moſt of 'em the Looks and Carriage of Gentlemen; and, to give 'em their due, behav'd themſelves with a great

great deal of Courtesie and Civility to me as a Stranger. My Guide would have shewed me the Lodgings and the Keeper's house; but these I thought were hardly worth my trouble, and so I desir'd him to go and take another Pint and I'd discharge him. While we were drinking our Pint, I ask'd him several Questions, but particularly concerning the management of Prisoners that were under close Confinement; he told me *that was good business indeed, and two or three for a time were enough to set up a Waiter in an Alehouse, but* (said he) *that's a Mystery we must not disclose*, and so I pres'd him no further. I ask'd him likewise the nature of their buying off their Fetters, and what might be the ordinary Charge of that? He told me, *they always measured that by the Ability and Circumstance of the Person they were to deal with, and had Irons of several sorts and sizes for that purpose.* I was puting some other Questions to him concerning the Fees of the Officers of their Family, their Way of Government, and Rules of ordering condemned Persons, &c. bnt here he smelt me, and so to avoid all future Discourse with some kind of Concern and Jealousie that I had drawn him too far into a Confession and Discovery of their Secrets, he left me.

And now, Sir, I have done with my lamentable Description of that famous Prison, and yet but only given you a short insight of the Calamities of those unfortunate Wretches that are forc'd into it. I don't doubt but there are many more aggravating Circumstances attending upon it, sufficient to make it one of the

most compleat and exalted Seats of ſolid and ſubſtantial Miſery upon the Face of the Earth. However, I am very well aſſured that I have ſaid enough to ſhew any ſenſible Man the Nature, and Circumſtance of the place, and to urge him, if he has any Bowels, to contribute his Aſſiſtance towards the Redreſs of it. But I know the Relation will fall into good hands; and therefore I ſhall not preſs it any further, but proceed to give you an Account much of the ſame kind with the former; which ſhall be the Subſtance of my next.

LETTER V.

Wherein the Practices and Proceedings of the Bailiffs *belonging to the* Marſhals Court *are expoſed, together with ſome ſhort Reflections upon their Conſtitution and Government, with a Deſcription of their Priſon.*

SIR,

HAVING briefly laid before you the Character of Bailiffs in general, and particularly of thoſe belonging to the Sheriff of *Middleſex*, together with a ſhort Deſcription of *Newgate*, I proceed now, in conformity to your Commands, to give you an Account of

the

the Behaviour and Practices of another ſort of Vermine, *i. e.* the Bailiffs that belong to the *Marſhals Court*. These are a ſort of Creatures that are in all Reſpects as bad, and in ſome, a great deal worſe than the former; and truly, conſidering every thing, have a great deal more Opportunity to be ſo. As to the original Conſtitution of this Court, I have nothing to do to enquire into it; only, as I am told, this Court at the beginning was only appointed to determine Cauſes and Differences between the King's Servants; and that by little and little it hath crowded it ſelf into the Practice it hath now got; and truly I am very much inclin'd to be of this Opinion, becauſe I cannot find that there is any regular Method eſtabliſhed for their Proceedings, eſpecially in the great Caſe of taking of Bail, which is generally made to the Jaylor, and is ſo odd a kind of Practice, that it ſeems to me as if they were at a loſs for ſome body to do this Office for them, and ſo were forc'd to make uſe of the Jaylor. What was the original Practice and Conſtitution of this Court, I confeſs, I am not Maſter of, neither doth it much matter as to my Purpoſe; but this I know by woful Experience, that there are more villanous Actions commited by the Bailiffs that belong to it than by half of the Kingdom beſide.

'Tis almoſt incredible what a ſtrange number there is of this ſort of Creatures, ſome ſay Fifteen hundred, ſome a great many more; in truth, I believe there may be a thouſand of

them that are *Commission Officers*, besides *Subalterns* and *Cadets*, viz. *Followers* and *Setters*. I have heard a Gentleman say, that hath been long acquainted with them, that *if 'twere possible to bring 'em to a general Rendezvouze they could muster at least Three thousand chosen Men, able to draw Swords upon Occasion.* Now Sir, who can reflect upon this strange Multitude, and withal consider that they are turn'd loose to prey upon the meaner sort of People only; (for they have rarely any Business with any but such) but must soon imagine they must needs make a very strange Havock and Destruction among them. Sir, I'll trouble you with a short Relation that happen'd within the Compass of my own Experience: some time before my Misfortunes broke in upon me, the Person in whose house I lodge was seized by one of these Parties for a small Debt of about Thirty Shillings that was in dispute between him and a Neighbour; the Man was as honest a reputable Man as any in the Street, and his Word I believe would have went for a hundred Pound in any part of the Town. Well, but for all this, these Sparks had got him, and the Constitution of this worthy Court must not be broken upon any account; he must either pay the money together with the charge of the Writ and the Arrest, or give Bail, or go to Prison. Upon which he sent for me and another Friend, and so we sign'd a Bail-Bond of 5 *l.* to indemnify Mr. *C— L——*, who is the Mr. of the Goal. Their demands for the Bail-Bond, &c. tho I fill'd it up my self (for as I remember never a one of those could

write)

write) was 4 *s.* and 6 *d.* and 3 *s.* and 6 *d.* more, which they had ſuck'd up in the interim, made 8 *s.* for this Job: but what was worſe, my Landlord being unskill'd in theſe ſort of Practices, & not Feeing an Attorney, according to the Rules of their Court, the very next *Friday*, which I think was but about 3 days after this Bail Bond was aſſign'd, and upon the *Saturday* morning following, the former Partizan, with a ſtronger Detachment came and beat up all our Quarters. Here was my Landlord, his Friend and my ſelf, all arreſted at the Suit of Mr. C—— L——, and kept in ſtrict Durance for the weighty conſideration of 30 odd ſhill. Well, to make up the matter, we ſent for the Plantiff, who would have took his Money and given a Diſcharge, but that, it ſeems, would not do now, the Tables were turn'd, Mr. *Chriſtopher Lowman* was the Plantiff, and he muſt be comprehended in the Articles of Peace, or the War muſt go on; there were ſeveral new Fees to be paid, both to the *Court* and *Priſon*, before we could come to a ſeparate Treaty. In ſhort, the *Commander in Chief* told us we muſt give good Guarrantees to anſwer the Damages that ſhould be awarded againſt us, and that it was not in the Directions of his Commiſſion to come to any other Terms. Well, there was no Remedy but we muſt ſend for ſome ſubſtantial Houſekepers to give *ſeparate Bail* to the *Keeper's Actions*, or elſe we muſt every one of us, *in propria Perſona*, prepare to take a Turn over the Water. To make ſhort of the Matter, we gave freſh Bail, which together with the Spunging, *&c.* amounted

to

to about 14 *s.* more. Now Sir, I appeal to your self whether this be not a very hopeful mess of Law, when 6 or 7 Persons must be engag'd, nay, expos'd to such a barbarous Gang of Miscreants as these for the poor Sum of 30 *s.* But to finish my Relation, my Landlord told me, that *beside the Debt, he was above* 3 *l. out of Pocket before he made a perfect end of the Bus'ness.* It seems the Pretence of this Court at the Original was to recover *small Debts* at easie Rates, and to bring them to a *speedy Issue*, this 'tis true was the specious pretence that this Court at first got a Reputation by, and this they pretend still; but how well it answers those Ends, I think any man may judge from the Relation aforesaid, as well as from the Sequel of their Practice in General; 'tis true, I think, their Writs for 90 *s.* cost but 2 *s.* 4 *d.* and those for 39 *s.* something less; but what then? they make them Returnable every Court-Day, which is once a Week, and commonly too they crowd in 3 or 4 Names into every one of them, so that when every thing is considered, the Charge of a Writ, and a Suit in that Court, is as expensive as in any Court in *Westminster Hall* in a Case of Debt. But, Sir, it doth not agree with my Design to give you a particular History of their whole Practice and Proceedings, but only some cursory Hints to let you see in short what a Cluster of Inconveniencies attend it. As for their Bailiffs, I confess I cannot think of a Name bad enough to call 'em by; *they are the very Sink and Outcast of Bailiffs themselves, a sort of Creatures so Ravenous, Wild and Despicable, that some of the better*

sort

sort of the Masters of this Order are ashamed to herd with 'em. And is not this then a very dismal thing, that such a prodigious Multitude of these intolerable Vermine should be suffered to prey about among the poor People as they do, and to run in common with them, carrying about Lyes, and setting them upon little Quarrels, *&c.* that they may force their own Trade, and get an Opportunity to lay their Venomous Paws upon 'em; what a sad Object is it to see 4 or 5 of the Vermine luging and tearing a poor Wretch, first to the Spunging-house, and then to their Jayl, for an inconsiderable Debt of 10 or 20 *s.* perhaps leaving the miserable Wife and Children to *beg* or *starve*, or *to be kept upon the Parish Charge in the Interim*: This is the common practice of every Day; and indeed 'tis almost incredible to be reported, how many honest Tradesmen and Labourers, poor Widows, and the like, have been perpetually ruin'd and undone by their Villany. But, Sir, I believe my Description of these Matters will be as unpleasant and ungrateful for you to read as they are for me to write, and therefore I'll leave 'em in the Middle, and so carry you to their Prison and shew you a few of the Miseries there too, and then shut up till the next Opportunity.

This Jayl is almost of the same Nature with *Newgate*, & considering 'tis a common Receptacle for Felons & Pyrates as well as Debtors, you must believe 'tis seldom without good store of Guest. For my part when I saw it, I must own I was much amaz'd at the Multitude that was there, which, as one of the Prisoners told me, was

about

about 160, and near 100 of 'em for small Debts under 5 l.

Whilst I was making my Observations, I was accosted by one of the most deplorable Objects I ever beheld, *a Woman almost naked and pinn'd*, who, as she told me, had been kept in there 17 months, *for only calling Mr. B. . . . the Bailiffs Wife Whore*. Here they live all together promiscuously all Day, till at Night the Keepers drive 'em into their respective Holes and Caverns. As near as I remember, ther's no Allowance at all for Debtors that are brought in by the Marshals Writs, so that unless they have Money to subsist themselves, they must inevitably be starv'd to death. Just as I was making my Exit one of their Partymen brought in an Old Gentlewoman, whereby I had the opportunity of seeing the Garnish Ceremony perform'd. I think they demanded in the whole 6 s. i. e. 1 for Footing, the other 5 for Garnish; but what was worse, it seems she had been a Fortnight at the Bailiffs House before, who had not left her a Farthing to help her self; so that the poor Matron begg'd heartily of her Fellow Prisoners to be excused in that Point, but all would not do, they call a Jury immediately upon her, and from a very short Consideration bring her in *Guilty to the Value of 6 s.* and that unless the Master of the Cellar would take her Word she must prepare to strip, *&c.* But, Sir, I would not tire you with these melancholy Curiosities neither; I have said enough, I presume to let you see what kind of Court and Government this is; there are, indeed, abundance

dance of other things that might be mention'd, *viz.* the extravagant Fees and Demands of the Jaylor and Turn-Keys, and the Tricks and Devices of the Waitors to extort Money from the poor Priſoner, *&c.* But I have detain'd you too long already; and therefore I'll take my leave for to night.

LETTER VI.

In which is a Relation of the Behaviour *and Practices of the Serjeants and Yeomen belonging to the Two* Compters, *together with the Reſpective Practice of theſe Courts; and alſo a ſhort Account of the Priſons appertaining to the City of* London.

SErjeants are generally a ſort of over grown Bayliffs, and in their Nature and Practice the very ſame as they are: Indeed they pretend to a Kind of Superiority, both in their Morals and Honeſty, beyond the reſt of the Brotherhood; but truly in the courſe of my Misfortunes I always found them to be Creatures exactly of the ſame Temper and Species. Their buſineſs is chiefly to attend upon the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs at their Reſpective Courts at *Guild-Hall*, at the *Seſſions Houſe* in the *Old Bayly*, and at the time of Execution of Criminals, and at all other times

and places, according as they are commanded, in consideration of which they have a Gown, and some other Fees and Immunities allowed 'em; but this, tho it was Originally the chief business for which they were intended, is become now but only the Shell and Husk of the Office: the Sweet and Profit of it consists in the Execution of Actions and Detachments, and 'tis by the Exorbitant Demands and Advantages they make from thence that several of 'em get considerable Estates in a few years. I knew one of them intimately, that in less then 12 years purchased 200 *l. per ann.* Land of Inheritance; How he got it, I need not inform you; but it seems there was some Grumbling in his Gizzard afterwards; for, in a deep Disgust and Dissatisfaction, he quitted the *Worthy Occupation*, and turn'd *Quaker*, and *in a little time became one of the powerfullest Holders forth in the whole Town.* These Gentlemen commonly buy their places of the Mayor or Sheriffs, and so do the Yeomen too, which are a sort of Under Vermine that are joyn'd to 'em to help 'em in their Managements, &c. They generally march out in small Bodies, seldom more than two in a Party, *viz.* a Serjeant and a Yeoman, unless it be upon great Expeditions; such as are the *Storming of a Shop*, or *the Bombarding of a Warehouse*, or as it was in former Days before a Peace was concluded between them and their Old Enemies the *Alsatians*. Now I think there's none but the *Knights Templers* hold out against them, and there truly I saw t'other day a strong Party of 'em handled very scurvily. The manner of it was thus; *It seems*

they

they had undertaken upon very large Considerations to lay violent Hands upon a certain Gentleman that had thrown himself into the Temple *to secure his best Effects, and accordingly finding him in a place where they thought they might make their Attacks upon him with least hazzard, they fell on with a great deal of Fury and Resolution, but truly the Gentleman perceiving the Enemy upon the Walls, and withal knowing how dangerous it was for him to quit his Fastness, immediately gives the Alarm, the Sentinels soon took it, and in a very few minutes a strong Party from the Garrison came to his Relief; the Fight at first was very bloody and obstinate, and several swinging Bastinadoes were exchanged on both sides, but then the later being every moment recruited with fresh Forces, the former were forc'd to retreat with a runing Fight and leave their Booty behind 'em, and what was worse, two of 'em were taken Prisoners, which according to an ancient Custom in that Garrison were forthwith taken to the Pump, and from thence to the House of Office, and there I'll leave them and go on with my Relation.* These Sparks are indeed a limited Number, and withal, are prohibited to arrest any Freman for any Debt under 40 *s.* They have a *Court of Conscience* in the City of *London* for such purposes, where *small matters* are determined with a great deal of Ease and Moderation; but then for the Foreigners they have no Regard to them, one of them rather than fail may be bon'd and held to Bail for 9 *d.* and what's worse, be forc'd to give the Gentleman that does him this Kindness, 5 *s.* for his

Reward, or else he'll put him in the Compter. 'Tis true, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs do often take 'em in Consideration, and sometimes displace them for their Villany and Extortion; but for all that, I'm confident they generally want to be new regulated as much as those that belong either to the *Marshalsea* or to the Sheriff of *Middlesex*. They have their Pretences and Artifices to wrack and screw Money from their Prisoners, under the Notion of Civility as well as they; they have their Spunginghouses and Spungers too, as they have: they can betray the Creditor, and trappan and deceive the Debtor as they can; in brief, they can Swear, Lye, Hector, Domineer and Cheat as well as the best of 'em all, and are in the main a very lewd, dissolute and disorderly Gang. Sir, I would not seem in the least partial, or to represent Men and Things *worse than they are*: I must confess there are divers of 'em, that, abstracted from their Office, as Times go now, may pass Muster well enough; but then consider them in their Function, and there's ne'er a Barrel the better Herring, they're all of 'em of a Peice. Money's the grand Game they all Hunt, and have it they will, and they matter not which Way. As to the Rules of their Courts and their Methods of Proceedings, I must own, they are in a great many Particulars very Regular and Expeditious, and withal, I believe, formerly a Suit might be commenc'd and carried quite thorow for a very small Charge, but then they have well improv'd the Business here of late, and drawn up the Fees of their Respective Offices

Offices to that unaccountable height; that a ſmall Debt is intirely ſwallowed up before the Cauſe is half determined. There are ſeveral things which upon a general Enquiry will require a Regulation; but for peace ſake I won't mention 'em, only theſe two I cannot paſs, *viz.* their *Juries*, and their *Foreign Pleas*. As to their *Juries*, I cannot help being a little out of humour with ſome of 'em, eſpecially with their *Cauſecatchers*. I mean *thoſe Worthy Citizens that have got Eſtates by being* Jurymen, *and attend upon it as their ordinary Employment*: I'm affraid indeed there's very often ſome Daubing in thoſe Caſes, and that too many of them know which Way the Caſe will go before they hear either the *Court* or the *Evidence*. I'm told there's a *particular Set of 'em*, who to make Matters eaſie and equal among themſelves have wiſely agreed, *that each ſhould have his Caſe in his turn*. This would be worth enquiring into upon Occaſion, but at preſent 'tis out of my Road. And then for their *Foreign Pleas*, 'tis a barbarous thing, that they ſhould wink at, or rather incline Perſons to enter their Actions, fee Attorneys, and perhaps run through the whole charge of their Courts, notwithſtanding they know that if the Defendant joins Iſſue, and pleads that his Debt was contracted out of the Verge of their Juriſdiction, the Plaintiff muſt be *nonſuit*, and ſo not only looſe all his own Charges, but likewiſe be obliged to pay his Adverſary's too. Well Sir, to make as ſhort of theſe Matters as I can, they are an equal Compoſition of *good and bad*, and if their Rates were reduc'd to their Ancient

Ancient Cuſtom, we might e'en let 'em reſt under the Umbrage of an Old Proverb, that *when the Old is gone ſeldom comes a better.* But then in the ſecond Place, for their Priſons, there indeed ther's Work enough both for Pity and Regulation: Indeed they are not ſo often interrupted with Thieves and Highwaymen as they are at *Newgate* and other Jayls, but excepting that, I ſee very little Difference; their Fees are very extravagant, and their *Turnkeys* and *Under Officers* ſtrangely inſolent and unmerciful; and for their *Common Side*, which the poorer Sort are confin'd to, 'tis as fulſom and nauſeous, and their Beds and Lodgings as loathſom and wretched as any of the reſt, *Newgate* itſelf not excepted: 'Tis true, if a Man has Money he may be furniſh'd with a tolerable good Lodging in either of the *Compters*, and ſo he may in any other Priſon about Town; but if his hard Circumſtances turn him in common among thoſe that are expoſed to live upon the Charity and Cuſtoms of the Houſe, why then, were it lawful to wiſh the Miſery and Deſtruction of an Enemy, we could not confine him to a place better adapted for this purpoſe than the *Common Side* in one of theſe Jayls. Beſide the two *Compters*, there is another Priſon belonging to the City of *London*, i. e. *Ludgate*; but thither none but *Freemen* and *Clergymen* are admitted. This is the beſt Priſon about *London*, both in Regard to its Endowment and Government, and yet here too, as I'm told, they have lately ſwell'd their Fees to a very ſtrange Bigneſs. In ſhort, the Jayls all over *England* want to be ſurveyed

surveyed, and to have their *Fees* and *Demands* fix'd, their *Endowments* restor'd, and their Ancient Customs and Immunities new settled and restablisht.

LETTER VII.

Wherein the Evil Practices of Pretended Solicitors are expos'd, and their Knavish Tricks and Artifices detected, which they make Use of to deceive Poor Prisoners and others, both out of their Money and Liberty.

SIR,

HAving in my former Letters given you a cursory Account of the base *Practices* of the Bailiffs and Serjeants in general, and hinted to you some of the most common and material Miscarriages of the *London* Prisons, I shall now lead you a little further, and briefly expose to you another Sort of Viperous Creatures, which, if possible, are of a Nature and Disposition more venomous and dangerous than the former. These are a kind of Vermin that pass upon the World under the Character of Sollicitors, and usually derive their Original from Superannuated Bailiffs, or from other Outcast Wretches, that in Knavish Suits and contentious Wranglings have consumed their Estates, and so are forc'd

forc'd to turn Rogues and Trappanners to get their last Bread; the Places of their Rendezvous were formerly the *Mint* and *Fryars*, but those Constitutions being happily dissolved, they have since been forc'd to Range at venture about Town. The chief Places they frequent now are the *Kings-Bench Walk* in the *Temple*, where they ply constantly, but in Term-time especially, that they may be ready to help an honest Client upon Occasion; or at the Grates of the *Compters*, *Marshalsea*, *Newgate*, and other Jayls, where under Pretence of a great deal of Knowledge in the Tricks and Turns of the Law, they inveigle poor Wretches that are ready to catch at every Deceitful Twig for Liberty, to fix their Confidence and Dependance upon 'em. Sir, it would be the Work of a Volume to descend into Particulars, and trace these Varlets through the whole Course of their Villanous Practices, I will only therefore, as in all my former, take notice of a few of their most practical and notorious Rogueries, from whence you may well enough judge of all the rest. Their chief Business is Perjury, and this they do to an Hairs breadth; for so much an Oath, they'll swear you through a whole Cause, and, what to an honest Man looks a little strange, do it so nicely and exactly, and withal join the Circumstances and Evidence so well together that I defy the best Counsel of 'em all to catch, or trap 'em in it; but then the Person that uses them had best take care too, for if he stops his Hand and does not feed 'em on, or gives 'em any Disgust, 'tis ten to one but they turn Tayl, join the contrary Party,

Party, and by ſome Knaviſh Stratagem or other come off from what they ſwore before, and impudently turn a Witneſs on the other ſide.

This is very ordinary amongſt 'em, and to be a good proficient in this uſeful Art of *Changing of Sides*, they eſteem among themſelves to be one of the moſt profitable and commendable Qualifications belonging to their Order. Another Inhuman piece of Knavery they have (as I mentioned before) is to cheat and deceive poor Priſoners: If they can once paſs the Gates and get in among 'em, they'r ſafe enough; and firſt, to initiate themſelves, they put on the Looks and Behaviour of Hypocrites, pray and cant, nay, rather than fail, ſhed ſome Crocodiles Tears which they'r always provided with to colour their Villany. When they have drawn any of the poor Wretches into a Conference, why, then the firſt thing they entertain 'em with is, the mighty things they have done for Priſoners in Diſtreſs, and all, as they inſinuate, in pure Pity and Commiſeration to their Condition, without the leaſt Reward or Expectation of Profit or Advantage. Here they pretend they have ſuch a Judge that is their particular Friend and never denies 'em any thing, ſuch an Attorney is their Relation, and will do their Buſineſs almoſt for nothing; ſuch a Judge's Clerk they have obliged by ſeveral Kindneſſes and Services, and that the Marſhal of the *Kings Bench* and Warden of the *Fleet* are ſo much their Slaves and Vaſſals that they dare not oppoſe any thing they requeſt of 'em. By ſuch kind of Lyes and Shams as theſe, back'd by their Hypo-

critical Cants and Formalities, 'tis great Odds but ſome of 'em are catcht. Well, when he finds he has a Bite, he firſt gives him a little more Line that he may have time enough to pouch the Bait, and when he perceives he's ſufficiently hamper'd he prepares by little and little to draw him to Land. Here he muſt be call'd aſide forſooth, and enjoined Secrecy under the Forfeiture of his Kindneſs, and withal, ſolemnly conjured to make an ample and true Diſcovery of all his Concerns, by Vertue of which he gets fully inſtructed which way to ſteer his Managements with the moſt Advantage; when he has ſounded him to the very Bottom and finds that his Eſtate or Effects will anſwer, he propoſes in conſideration of ſome ſmall Matter, which they won't fall out about, to procure him Bail. This he can do well enough, for they have always belonging to their Gang ſome honeſt charitable Houſekeepers that for a valuable Conſideration will bail a man at any time; what if they are not in Strictneſs of Law worth double the Debt? 'tis all one they'll ſwear they are, and then there's no refuſing, but their Bail muſt be taken. And here their Game begins, when they have Bail'd the Perſon, and got him intirely into their own Clutches, then Mr. Solicitor opens the Nature of the Caſe to him. *Sir*, ſays he, *you ſee what we have done for you, you are now at Liberty, and free from the Diſmalneſs and Expence of a Priſon and let looſe again into the World, and all this is done for you by perfect Strangers; but then*, ſays he, *I know you are a man of Sence and Gratitude, and ſo I need not trouble you with the*

Nature

Nature of the Obligation: Here he calls him aside and directs him what kind of Offers he should make to 'em; if he says he hath no Money, says he, you must raise what you can, and give 'em your Note for the rest; well, when this is complied with, then one of his Worthy Bail begins his part in the Management; Sir, says he, we find you are a very honest civil Gentleman, and you may depend upon it, that if you should at any time fall into any sort of trouble, if you send for us we'll come and deliver you immediately: That we will, says the other Cannibal, but then, considering the Gentleman's an absolute Stranger, I think he ought to give us some kind of Security to indemnify us; this is agreed to without doubt, and so a Bond and Judgment, without either Limitation or Defeasance, are forthwith Sign'd and Sealed, and then they have done with him for the present; but still the worst part is behind; 'tis ten to one but by some Villanous Stratagem or other they get themselves arrested upon his Account, and then they have a good Pretence to fall upon him with their Judgment and sweep away all he has, and so the poor Man is ruin'd and undone for ever. But in the second place, when this cruel Varlet finds the Circumstances of the Prisoner too bad, and dangerous for him to be Bail'd, and that there's nothing to be made of him by that experiment, then he tryes another, and advises him to bring a *Habeas Corpus*, and remove himself to the *Fleet* or *King's Bench*, and he'll go and compound with the Marshall or Warden (both which he perswades him he has at his

beck) for his Liberty, and withal, rather than fail, urges him to sell or pawn his Goods, Cloaths, or Working Instruments to raise Money to defray the Charge. When he has brought this *Habeas Corpus*, for which he exacts commonly twice as much as the real Expence of the thing is, and hath fix'd him in one of these Places, he certainly leaves him there to get his Liberty how he can, unless he finds he can make a clandestine Bargain, and cheat him out of 2 or 3 Guineas more by some new sort of Artifice: But then, in the third place, if he find the Prisoner too poor and too far in Debt to be Bail'd, and that his Condition is so very miserable and low that he cannot by any manner of means raise Money to remove himself, then he possesses him that the Action is wrong laid, and if he will summons the Plaintiff before a Judge, by Virtue of a particular Interest there, he need not question but he'll have him discharg'd; upon which Motive the poor Wretch parts with all that he has in the World that should assist him in his miserable Confinement, and gives it to him to encourage him to hasten the Business, which when he has once got into his perfidious Paws, 'tis a thousand to one if ever he comes near him any more. Well, when by such kind of Tricks as these they have render'd themselves so hateful and obnoxious to all the Prisons about Town, that they dare not come near any of 'em for fear of their Pumps or Houses of Office; then they steer to the *Old Baily*, and endeavour to crowd themselves into the Company of condemned Criminals

minals or their Friends and Relations, and tell 'em that if they can raiſe any Money, they can make an Intereſt at Court to get their Friend a Pardon or at leaſt a Reprieve *ſine Die*; this has been a very uſeful part of their Practice formerly; indeed 'tis a little blown upon at preſent, and truly I am afraid that many a miſerable Creature hath been deceived not only out of his Money but his Soul too by it. Sir, their Tricks and Villanies are numberleſs, and 'twould amuſe a ſober Man to think what exalted Lying and Impudence they impoſe upon the World; how ſtrangely and myſteriouſly they twiſt themſelves into the Secrets and Affairs of poor Debtors, and then how barbarouſly and perfidiouſly they ſell and betray them to their Creditors. 'Tis methinks one of the greateſt Riddles that this Town affords, how ſo many thouſands of 'em do to ſubſiſt. I'm confident I have ſeen a hundred at a time ſcouring among their Clients, the Whores and Thieves at *Hicks's Hall*, at a Seſſions, and ſome of them in pretty good Habits too. Well Sir, I will trouble you with them no longer. In ſhort, you ſee that each of theſe Pretended Solicitors is a Compoſition of Solid and Subſtantial Villany, a Wretch ſo compendiouſly wicked, dangerous and deſpicable, that in my Opinion the Suppreſſing of them would be a Work of equal if not greater Conſequence, than that of Bailiffs and the Regulation of Jayls.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Which gives a general Account of the Fleet, *and* Kings-Bench, *and briefly shews Men their Mistake in Purchasing a Pretended Liberty or Freedom from either of them, and withal discovers the certain Danger and Charge that depends upon it.*

SIR,

THE *Fleet* and *Kings-Bench* are the two Chief Prisons in *England*, and provided with several eminent Priviledges and Advantages above the rest. The *Fleet* in particular, is a well built convenient House, accommodated with good Water, a Conduit, a Chappel where there is constantly Prayers twice a day, handsom Lodgings and Apartments, and so many other Conveniencies that at first Sight it appears to a Stranger rather like a College than a Jayl. The *Kings Bench* is much of the same Kind, enjoys the Benefit of large Rules, good Rooms and a Bowling-Green, *&c.* So that if things were honestly and sincerely managed, an Unfortunate Man might wade through his Confinement with a great deal of Comfort and Satisfaction in either of them. I suppose indeed, it was the Original design in granting these Prisons so many Immuni-

Immunities beyond others, to fit 'em for Sanctuaries for such Persons whose Misfortunes had deprived 'em of their Liberty; but then, here's the Misfortune on't, the Government of 'em too often falls into ill Hands, and then all these Advantages signifie nothing. As to the Governors themselves they're commonly Gentlemen, and Men of Parts, and I dare engage for one or two of 'em, they're above a little Knavish Trick or Design; but then they're pester'd with so many devouring Officers, Pretenders and Hangers on, that if the Prisoner be not first instructed in the Nature and Temper of the Vermine, 'tis ten to one but they devour him. I was once intimately acquainted with the Chief Person that had the Management of the *Fleet*; and truly I took the Freedom to tell him my Sentiments concerning the Irregularity of his House, and what a noise it made, and how it was resented in the World; upon which he frankly told me he was very sensible there were several things transacted that ought not to be, and what was worse, as Cases stood then, it was out of his Power to remedy them; and withal, he told me with some concern, that amongst all that great Herd he had constantly depending and preying upon him, there was not two that he knew, upon whose Honesty and Integrity he might absolutely rely, and indeed I found his Words true; for in a little time after, he narrowly escaped being eat up by his own Dogs: but Sir, this is a little Foreign to your Question, and so, if you please to pardon the short Digression, I'll go on with your

your Design. When a Prisoner hath brought his *Habeas Corpus*, and is removed from an inferiour Prison, to the *Fleet* or *Kings Bench*, the Waiter or Tipstaff, that receives him from the Jaylor at the Judges Chamber, carries him directly to one of these Places, or at least to some Place near; if he has a mind to compound for his Liberty, without going into the Gates; when this Ceremony of Compounding is over, and he hath given Bond and Judgment to Indemnifie the Warden or Marshal, and Security if he has any; why then, he's honour'd with a little bit of Paper, which first delivers him out of the Talons of the Scoundrel that waits upon him, and withal allows him the Liberty to walk into the Rules, *alias* whither he pleases; but yet for all his haste, there's something else for him to do before he must march; next comes the Gentleman of the Papers, and he must have 2 5s. for the Fees of the Servants of the House, & 4 4d. more for his Commitment Fee, and then he may move, and yet 'tis very hard if Mr. Waiter parts with him without half a Piece for his Attendance; no, no, that must be done too, or else that Gentleman's highly displeased, and *God Dam him, he'll be even with him*; and so he certainly will, for they are the curstest Vermin in the whole Gang; but I intend to have a Touch with 'em all by and by, and so I'll let him alone till I come at him among the rest.

But now the Prisoner hath past all these Pikes he may go home, and how long must he stay there? why, till he's arrested again, or till the Officers in Chief, or some of the Subalterns want

want to speak with him, and then a Runner is dispatcht to him, to bring him along with him, with Instructions to tell him there's a Declaration come, or that there has been a Plaintiff threatning to sue the Office, and they must understand him a little better, and have better Security, or else he must go into the House. To make short of the Story, 'tis Ten to One but this is all a Device and Contrivance between a Waiter and some little pretending Officer, to get half a Piece, or a Guinea, to equip him at Night with a little Wine and a Supper. But then if they find he will be terrified by such kind of Projects, for the future, they'll suck him with a vengeance, and take their Rounds till every One hath had his snack of him. In short, Sir, as Cases stand now, I cannot see what kind of Liberty this can be they pretend to allow a Prisoner. If his Debt be upon *Main Process*, why then he may be Arrested again, and so must be forc'd to bring a New *Habeas Corpus*, or go to another Jayl. If he be under *Execution*, why then if the Creditor meets him out of the Rules, he presently falls upon the Office for an Escape, and the Office consequently upon the Security; and then 'tis some odds but there's 2 or 3 undone into the bargain. But as Cases stand with me, I must not dive too deep into their Secret History: I know enough to serve my own turn: and I suppose I have said enough too to let any Rational Person see the Expence and Danger he's expos'd to from this kind of Freedom. Indeed I cannot tell how far it may suit with some Persons Circumstances and Conveniency more

than others: however, in the main, I am very confident there must be more Cost than Worship, and that the Advantage in general, can never answer the Charge.

And now I wou'd have done with 'em, but that I have forgot to pay my Respects to a few honest Gentlemen, that perhaps wou'd take it in dudgeon, if I should miss 'em, I mean their Worthy Waiters. These are, 'tis true, but the Fag-end of the Corporation; but for all that, they'r Persons of Considerable Power now and then. I would not spend much time upon 'em neither, and therefore I'll have done with 'em as soon as I can. The business of these Gentlemen is to wait upon Prisoners when they go out upon their Day-Rules, and to fetch in those that are Escap'd, if they can catch 'em, and to run of Errands, &c. These are indeed the uses they are design'd for; but truly the Gentlemen being sensible of their own high Qualifications and Merit, have wisely found out some other Employments: some set up for Wardens and Marshals, some for Tipstaves, some for one sort of business, and some for another: so that in short, they have almost drawn in all the Second hand matters of both the Prisons into their own hands. One of the worthy Knights of this Order, not long since, did me the honour of his Company, once a Fortnight, for a considerable time together, and, as he said, came every time with directions from the Warden to bring me into the House; but for half a Crown and a Quartern of Brandy, we still made up the matter, and parted good Friends. Well, Sir, to sum

up

up this Relation, *The Fleet* and *Kings Bench*, with all these Inconveniencies, are still the best Prisons in the Kingdom: And truly, if a man finds his Circumstances are like to continue him a Prisoner for any considerable time, I think he cannot lay out 40 or 50 *s.* better than to remove himself to one of 'em; here he'll be secure to find good Company, good Lodging, and the Opportunity of a Chappel, and indeed every thing convenient, with a little prudent Management, to sweeten the bitter Draught, and make the Nauseous Confinement go down a little the more easily.

LETTER IX.

Which contains a Short Reflection upon all the Reſt, and alſo ſhews, that the Irregularities and Evil Practices of Countrey Jayls, are in all Caſes equal, and in ſome worſe than thoſe at London.

WELL, Sir, to draw as faſt as I can towards a Concluſion of this Unpleaſant Task: I ſhall in this only trouble you with a few ſhort Reflections upon what I have ſaid in my former, together with a haſty View of the Miſeries and Oppreſſions of poor Priſoners in their Confinements in Countrey Jayls. As to what I have ſaid in general, you may depend upon it for Truth; moſt of theſe unhappy Occurrences are Matters that I have either Experienc'd my ſelf, or been an Eye-Witneſs of in others. I well knew your Deſign, in giving your ſelf and me this Ungrateful Trouble, would not admit of Trifles, and therefore I only ſingled out ſome of the moſt material Paſſages, and leapt over all the reſt that I thought were any ways Trivial or Impertinent. In my Expreſſions, I confeſs, I have now

now and then us'd a little Freedom and Indecency; but then it was no where but when I had a Wretch, or some base Action to describe, that I wanted a Name or Title to call 'em by. And for my Method, 'twas the best I could think of upon such short warning. Besides, I consider'd I was to write Letters, and not Books, and so confin'd to comprehend what I had to say in as narrow a compass as I could. Sir, I will not trouble you with very many Apologies. I have given you, in as few Lines and Words as I thought the Nature of my Relation would bear, a Dismal Account of the Sufferings of poor Prisoners, first from the Tyrannick and Insolent Usage they are expos'd to from Bayliffs in general; and then laid before you some of the Grievances and Hardships, and but some of them neither, which they are forc'd to undergo in their Respective Jayls and Confinements belonging to this Town. And now, Sir, I will only make a short turn into the Country, and take a transitory View of the State of the Prisons and Prisoners there, and then trouble you no further upon the Subject. The Villanies of Bayliffs and Jaylors is an Epidemick Distemper, and hath unhappily spread it self over the whole Nation; and truly I think, when every thing is considered, rages with as much Violence in the Country as it does here in Town. In the Country the Bayliffs have Commenc'd the Villainous Methods of Spunging, and Civility-money; Nay, they have Improv'd the Practice of betraying the Creditor, and bringing the Debtor under Contribution:

There

Therethey Ride Lords and Masters, Insult and Hector even the Gentry and Clergy, and the Common People, especially, Those that are in Debt are their very Slaves and Vassals, and stand in more awe of 'em than they do of their Justices of the Peace. There they live at large, have no body to curb or inspect their Insolence, but are in a manner let loose, like Mad Dogs, or rather like Wolves and Vultures, to snap at and prey upon every thing they come nigh. There the poor Prisoners are forc'd to bear the severe Usage and Hardships of their Keepers and Jaylors, and have no body to pity or hear their Complaints, or at least no body to redress their Grievances, or to comfort or support them in their Agonies. There's no Judge there, nor no Tipstaff in the Country to take these merciless Wretches into Custody; but they are left intirely to the Guidance of their own Pride, ill Nature and Avarice, to Insult and Domineer, Fetter, Confine, Cheat and Impose upon their wretched Captives how they please: And truly their Behaviour in general is inhuman and barbarous enough; and what's the greatest Misfortune of all too, their distance from *London*, hath render'd their Removal by *Habeas Corpus* almost impracticable. Sir, I have been a little Curious in these Affairs, and, as Occasion offer'd, have now and then made it my Business to pry into these unpleasant Mysteries, and indeed thro the whole Course of my Observations I never found any thing that could distinguish the Practices of Bailiffs and Jaylors and the ill Management of Prisons in the Country from these in

Town,

Town, unleſs it be that the former are attended with greater Hardſhips and Severities.

And now, Sir, I have done with the Subject, and ſhall only put you in mind of One Thing more, and take my leave. The Crys and Groans of theſe Miſerable Wretches have already taken Wing, and diſpers'd themſelves over the Face of the whole Kingdom: Whether they'll ſtop here or no, I cannot tell; but this I know, That if there is not ſome ſudden means uſed to redreſs their Grievances, in all probability, they will aſſail Heaven too, and call as loud for Vengeance from thence, as they do for Pity and Aſſiſtance here.

LET-

LETTER X.

In which ſome ſhort Methods are propos'd for putting theſe Affairs into a better Poſture: And then the whole is Humbly Submitted to better Judgment and Examination.

AND now, Sir, I am come to the concluding Part of your Commands, *viz.* to give you my Sentiments how theſe great Evils may be Redreſt and Rectify'd. And here indeed I muſt own my Inſufficiency; This is the greateſt work of all: And to ſpeak my Thoughts of the Matter, ſeems rather to require the Judgment of a whole Nation than the Single Opinion of a private Perſon. Sir, all that I can do in this great Affair is only this, to give you my poor Thoughts how both the Debtor and Creditor may beſt fence and defend themſelves againſt the Frauds and Violence of theſe kind of Vermine; and then in anſwer to what you are pleas'd to urge, add my ſhort Sentiments how the whole may be put in a better Poſture.

Firſt,

First, therefore, for the Creditor, when things are come to that unhappy pass that he's forc'd to use Extremity, I passionately advise him never to deliver the Writ out of his hands or suffer the Bailiff out of his Sight till he has done his Business; for if he does, 'tis ten to one but he's betrayed, and at once looseth both his Debt and Charge. The Writ is the general Basis upon which they build their consequent Rogueries; when they once get that, they are thoroughly equip'd either to betray the Creditor or compound with the Debtor, and they may both depend upon it that for a shilling advantage they'll be false to either Party. And then for the Debtor, let him take this with him too, that altho by a large Bribe and Promise or something like it, he dearly purchases their Forbearance for once or twice, whenever he slacks his hand the Peace is broke and all the former Kindnesses are forgot, and the Word is then, according to the common Cry, *Bail, Jayl or Money.*

In the second place, when they have got him into their Clutches, I caution him as a Friend not to be decoy'd by 'em into a Spunging-house, but if he finds he can't comprehend the Business in a very short time, to repair directly to Prison, for tho that be a very melancholy Remedy 'tis the lesser Evil of the two and consequently the better to be chosen. They may pretend that this will expose him to disgrace and to the rest of his Creditors, and put him to Charge and what not, but this is all but a Ravish Blind and a Trick. They make it their

Business to do that for him as soon as they have got him. Besides he's no longer welcom with them than his Money lasts, and when they have wrack'd him out of what he has, he must march to Jail after all. The only Objection that I know of, is the extravagant Fees of the Jaylor, and can there be no remedy found out to regulate it? That's strange indeed! I know the grand Pretence is, That their Prisoners are very numerous, and that they are forc'd to keep a great many Servants, &c. but then must this be all thrown upon the Wretched and Unfortunate? Why, where's the Justice and Humanity of that? For my own part I tremble to think of these things, and certainly they must be the Subject of a great deal of Wonder and Sorrow to any body that will give himself the Trouble to Reflect upon 'em. Well Sir, to give you my hasty Thoughts of the whole Matter; This infectious Distemper spreads it self so fast that unless Care be taken, and proper Medicines apply'd to suppress it, it will at length swell into a general Contagion. But then how this may be done, is the great *Query*. Why, very easily certainly; Let but the Fees of the Bayliffs be setled, let them be prohibited under severe Penalties, to detain any person in their Custody above such a time; Let their Swords be taken from their sides, and their Battoons out of their hands, and their White Wands restor'd in their places: Let their Number be restrain'd and limited, and honest men put into the Offices; and that part of the great Work's done, And then for Prisons, let there be but a general Survey made,

made, their Ancient Liberties and Immunities reſtor'd, and Commiſſioners appointed to inſpect into their Indowments, and inquire into their Irregularities in general, let their Fees be Eſtabliſht, and a Copy of 'em fixt continually upon each of their Gates, I'm confident a great many of the Miſeries of theſe unfortunate Wretches, would vaniſh in an inſtant; and good Old Hoſpitable *England* lie no longer under the ungrateful Reflection of being the moſt ſevere and mercyleſs to her Priſoners, of any other Nation in the Chriſtian World. But, Sir, you have begun the buſineſs, and I don't doubt but your Piety and Charity will urge you on till you have happily brought it to an end, which will at once entitle you to the bleſſings of both Worlds, to the Prayers of the Priſoners and Captives, to the Thanks and Praiſes of the Debtors and Creditors, and to the good Wiſhes and Commendations of all, but eſpecially of,

Your Obedient Servant.

FINIS.

THE

CONTENTS.

I. *THE First Letter is only an Introduction to the rest, and briefly shews the Cause and Intent for which they were writ.*

II. *The Roguish and Villanous Tricks of* Bayliffs *in general, and the strange Stratagems and Devices they have to extort Money both from the Debtor and Creditor.*

III. *In the Third the Irregular Practices of the* Bayliffs *belonging to the Sheriff of* Middlesex *are particularly detected and expos'd, together with a short Description of* Newgate, *as it Relates both to the Debtor, Felon and Traytor.*

IV.

IV. *The Fourth Letter is the Continuation of the Description of* Newgate, *and especially of the Common Side.*

V. *In the Fifth the base Practices of the* Bayliffs *belonging to the* Marshals Court, *are exposed, together with some short Reflections upon their Constitution and Government, with a Description of their Prison.*

VI. *The Sixth gives the Relation of the Behaviour of the* Serjeants and Yeomen *belonging to the two* Compters, *together with the manner of Proceeding in those Courts; and also a short Account of the Prisons belonging to the City of* London.

VII. *In the Seventh the Evil Practices of pretended Solicitors are exposed; and the Cunning and Knavish Stratagems and Artifices they make use of to deceive poor Prisoners, and others, both out of their Money and Liberty.*

VIII. *The Eighth gives a general Account of the* Fleet *and* Kings Bench; *and briefly shews Men their mistake in purchasing*

a pretended Liberty or Freedom from either of 'em; and withal discovers to 'em the certain danger and charge that depends upon it.

IX. *The Ninth contains a short Reflection upon the whole Subject of the rest, and then shews that the Irregularities and ill practices of Country* Jayls *and* Bayliffs *are in all cases equal, and in some much worse than those at* London.

X. *In the Tenth and last, some short Proposals are offer'd for the putting these Affairs into a better Posture, and then the whole is Humbly submitted to better Judgment and Examination.*